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PUBLIC AFFAIRS REQUIREMENTS OF THE NATIONAL URANIUM TAILINGS PROGRAM

by

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CONTENTS

		Page
1.0	SUMMARY	1
2.0	SCOPE	3
3.0	GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS	4
3.1	RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER WASTE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS	4
3.2	THE NIMBY SYNDROME	5
3.3	LESSONS FROM OTHER PROGRAMS	7
4.0	AUDIENCES	9
4.1	THE GENERAL PUBLIC	10
4.2	THE URANIUM MINING INDUSTRY	11
4.3	SCIENTISTS	11
4.4	THE NEWS MEDIA	12
4.5	RESIDENTS OF COMMUNITIES NEAR MINES AND TAILINGS PILES	12
4.6	PUBLIC INTEREST GROUPS	13
4.7	GOVERNMENTS	15
5.0	PUBLIC INFORMATION MATERIALS	15
5.1	FACT SHEET OR PAMPHLET	16
5.2	BOOKLET	16
5.3	SCIENTIFIC DOCUMENTS	17
5.4	SLIDES	17
5.5	SLIDE-TAPE PRESENTATIONS	17
5.6	FILM	18
5.7	POSTERS	19
5.8	NEWSLETTERS	19
5.9	NEWS RELEASES	20
5.10	FEATURE ARTICLES	20
6.0	DELIVERY OF INFORMATION	21
6.1	RESPONSE TO REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION	21
6.2	USE OF OTHER ORGANIZATIONS	21
6.3	SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS	22
6.4	DIRECT MAIL	22
6.5	FILM DISTRIBUTION	23
6.6	ADVERTISING	23
6.7	BRIEFINGS FOR SELECTED AUDIENCES	24
6.8	MEDIA SEMINARS	24
6.9	NEWS CONFERENCES	25

CONTENTS (continued)

		Page
7.0	PUBLIC PARTICIPATION	26
	7.1 PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION	27
	7.2 EXPECTATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES	28
	7.3 TECHNIQUES	31
8.0	OPTIONAL PROGRAM LEVELS	34
	8.1 INFORMATION MATERIALS	35
	8.2 DELIVERY OF INFORMATION	35
	8.3 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION	36
9.0	RECOMMENDATIONS	36
10.0	TRAINING, MANPOWER AND FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS	38
	10.1 BUDGETS AND STAFF	38
	10.2 STAFF TRAINING	39
11.0	CONCLUSION	40

"In the modern world the intelligence of public opinion is the one indispensable condition of social progress."

Charles William Elliot

(Inaugural address as President of Harvard, 1869)

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1.0 SUMMARY

This document examines the public affairs requirements of the National Uranium Tailings Program, evaluates the public acceptance challenges and opportunities facing the program and makes recommendations for various courses of action to better enable the program to achieve public acceptance. Because a number of other programs dealing with radioactive waste already exist, the National Uranium Tailings Office will have some difficulty in establishing its identity and in distinguishing itself in the public mind from these other programs. It will also have difficulty with the already commonly-held public perception that the Office's mandate is to dispose of uranium tailings.

Through interviews with individuals in communities where uranium tailings already exist, it was established that the Program will not likely be subject to the NIMBY Syndrome, which often causes difficulties for waste management programs. Therefore, the Office should not encounter any difficulty with the public in carrying out the field research portion of its work, so long as it undertakes the minimum public information program required to establish its identity.

The social problems that often accompany waste management programs are considered, and it is recommended that the Office undertakes a public participation program to help ensure the public's acceptance of its work and of the criteria for the disposal of uranium tailings that will ultimately be developed by the Atomic Energy Control Board. Interviews with individuals representing organizations that would be likely participants in such a program indicated a willingness to assist in developing technical solutions that would be socially acceptable. The concern is raised that failure to engage in such a program may result in the development of technical solutions that ultimately cannot be implemented because they do not have the necessary degree of public acceptance.

Recommendations are made for the involvement of all of the publics that the Office should deal with, including representatives of communities where tailings already exist and of environmental groups interested in the issue. A suggestion is also made that an independent technical advisory committee, consisting of scientists not connected with the uranium industry, be established to review the Office's work.

Techniques for the development and dissemination of public information materials are detailed, and recommendations are made for the consideration of the Office in developing a public information program.

It is concluded that a large-scale public affairs program is not required to allow the Office to complete its

studies, but that by following a program that includes a public participation component, the Office can assist in developing public acceptance for its work. This would ultimately assist the Atomic Energy Control Board in developing and promulgating criteria for the disposal of uranium tailings that will be acceptable to a large portion of the public.

2.0 SCOPE

The public affairs requirements of the National Uranium Tailings Program are examined, with a view to ensuring that the Program can accomplish its scientific objectives with maximum public support and minimum public opposition. A further consideration is the requirement of the program to achieve maximum credibility for its research results so that these results can be accepted by regulatory agencies and by those who will ultimately have responsibility for the final close-out of uranium tailings piles in Canada.

Three alternative levels of potential public affairs activity are considered: a high-profile program, a medium-level program and a minimum program. These three levels are examined, potential budget implications of each are discussed, and recommendations are made for the consideration of the Office.

It is not the intention of this document to examine the nature or the extent of the uranium tailings problem in Canada. That task has already been accomplished by technical experts in other reports that preceded the

formation of the Office. However, the view of officials and individuals in communities at present affected by tailings, and of representatives of public interest groups which have in the past expressed both an interest in tailings and a general opposition to uranium mining (at least in part because of a concern about tailings management) is examined to the extent that it bears on the ability of the Office to effectively carry out its work and achieve its goals. Interviews have been conducted with a number of such individuals to seek their views and determine whether it would be possible for the Office to obtain their cooperation in attempting to perform its stated tasks with greater public acceptance.

In making recommendations to the Office with regard to the scope and direction of its public affairs activities, consideration has been given to the view that the measure of the success of any research program is the extent to which its results are usefully implemented.

3.0 GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 Relationship to Other Waste Management Programs

The Office is likely to encounter public confusion over the proliferation of government programs dealing with radioactive wastes. A Nuclear Fuel Waste Management Program has been established at AECL's Whiteshell Nuclear Research Establishment, a Low Level Radioactive Waste Management Office has been established within another part of AECL, the nuclear

utilities deal with low level, medium level and fuel (high level) waste, mining companies deal with uranium tailings and arrangements exist for the storage of wastes from the commercial and medical applications of radioisotopes. In the midst of such a large number of programs, it may be difficult for the National Uranium Tailings Program to establish a distinct identity. The public may be confused over the Office's mission, especially as it relates to the final disposal of wastes.

It will be important to clearly define the Office's mandate to its various publics, especially as there is already a misconception that the Office has responsibility for cleaning up abandoned tailings piles. Communities that have had experience with other waste management programs will find it difficult to distinguish between them, as all government agencies are assumed by many members of the public to speak with the same voice.

3.2 The NIMBY Syndrome

The Not in My Back Yard (NIMBY) Syndrome is a sociological phenomenon that appears to be closely identified not only with radioactive wastes, but with toxic wastes of all kinds. Briefly stated, it is the belief of people in a particular locality that they have no specific responsibility for wastes that have been created by society as a whole, and thus that they should not be imposed upon by having their "back yard"

selected as the site for a disposal facility. Relevant factors are past experience with unsatisfactory disposal systems and the moving of wastes from a place where they were generated to a "more suitable" disposal location.

The NIMBY Syndrome results in extremely emotional responses to proposals for waste disposal sites, and appeals to logic do not appear to have any effect.

The NIMBY Syndrome has affected both the Nuclear Fuel Waste Management Program and the Office of Low Level Radioactive Waste Management.

The National Uranium Tailings Program, however, should be relatively immune from the NIMBY Syndrome for two reasons:

i) The uranium mine tailings that require disposal are the wastes that "belong" to the communities where they are located. They are generated in the process of providing an economic benefit to the local residents, and thus are not seen to be "other people's" wastes. A similar reaction to such locally generated wastes can be seen with regard to pulp mill effluents, smelter effluents, chemically toxic mine tailings and refinery effluents.

ii) Because it is not economically feasible to do so, there is no question of moving uranium tailings

over long distances. The NIMBY Syndrome is generally encountered where proposals to move wastes are made, but not where proposals are made for the insitu disposal of existing wastes. In the latter case, whatever is done to the wastes will be an improvement over the situation the community is already experiencing.

3.3 Lessons from Other Programs

The problems of waste disposal are often seen as merely technical problems, and were considered so in the early stages of the Nuclear Fuel Waste Management Program. It is now generally recognized that the sociological problems of waste disposal are as important as the technical problems, and at times there is difficulty in striking an appropriate balance when addressing these two related but very different problems.

One possible response by a technical organization is that social problems are not the purview of science, and should be left for elected officials to resolve. This approach rarely produces acceptable results for society, as political leaders are not usually in a position to conduct the kind of long-range programs that lead to public understanding and acceptance. They are at the same time unwilling to dictate the implementation of technical solutions that are not publicly accepted, because the democratic process requires that they be responsive to the wishes of their

constituents. It therefore falls on the technical organization charged with program responsibility not only to lay the scientific groundwork for waste disposal technology, but also to develop the social acceptance of that technology. Without the latter, there is a very real risk that a solution that is technically acceptable could be socially unacceptable. While the pure scientist might feel he had given good value for his money, the public would be poorly served by such an approach because it would not be able to implement the technology it had paid to develop. This philosophy also reflects consideration of the guidelines established by the federal Auditor-General for the review of research programs. These guidelines state that one measure to be applied when judging the success or failure of a research program is the benefit received by society from the implementation of the research results.

It is now generally accepted by the management of the Nuclear Fuel Waste Management Program that public acceptance of its results is necessary for the success of its work, and the federal government has recognized this need by providing funds for public affairs activities. The Low Level Radioactive Waste Management Office, an operation similar in size to the National Uranium Tailings Office, has also recognized this need and has a public affairs officer on its staff.

Managers of non-radioactive waste management programs in many areas are also beginning to recognize

that public understanding and acceptance is the key to the implementation of waste disposal technology. Such diverse jurisdictions as Alberta, Ontario, Manitoba and the State of Minnesota are heavily committed to public interaction programs in their search for solutions to the hazardous and special wastes problem. In each case, these programs involve much more than the provision of information. They include public workshops, interactive meetings with interested individuals and organizations, and a process for resolving the site selection question by a decision-making process that allows for several levels of public input. This latter aspect need not concern the National Uranium Tailings Office, since it is not responsible for selecting a site. Indeed, since uranium tailings disposal does not require significant movement of wastes, site selection is not required.

It is however important to note that in each of the waste management programs discussed above, the site selection phase is preceded by a process that seeks to develop a public consensus on waste disposal technology, and it is doubtful that this step could be omitted in the case of the National Uranium Tailings Program.

4.0 AUDIENCES

The National Uranium Tailings Program has a large number of audiences that are potentially important to it during the course of conducting its work and in the ultimate

acceptance of the research results. These audiences have widely varying views on the extent and nature of the uranium tailings problem, and can be expected to have equally widely varying views on the solutions required for close-out of tailings piles. It is imperative that the Office interact with all of its audiences to the extent required, and not limit its interaction to one or two groups. Failure to interact with all audiences likely will result in difficulties at a later stage when attempts are made to use the results of the Office's research as the basis for regulations or for remedial action.

The Office has already established links with some of its audiences. It can be expected that, as with any program, some audiences will not wish to interact for one reason or another, but that should not be used as the basis for failing to make the attempt.

The following audiences have been identified:

4.1 The General Public

Because public funds are being expended on the operations of the Office, the public has a right to know about the program and some effort on the part of the office is required to provide the public with information.

In addition, there is some public concern about the long-term aspects of tailings management, and it would be desirable to keep people informed about the steps being taken to study these and about the progress being made in the research.

4.2 The Uranium Mining Industry

The uranium mining industry will obviously be greatly affected by the Atomic Energy Control Board regulations resulting from the Office's research into the close-out of uranium tailings piles. For economic reasons, the industry would prefer that the proposed solutions and regulations not be overly expensive, especially in view of the high ratio of tailings to yellowcake and the relatively low value of uranium at this time.

The mining industry also has the most experience in tailings management, and controls access to active tailings management areas. For these reasons, it is necessary for the Office to maintain good relations with the mining companies. Without ready access to the companies' documents and experience, and without their co-operation in taking measurements in existing tailings piles, the Office will not be able to perform its work adequately.

4.3 Scientists

The scientific credibility of the research work performed by the Office is of paramount importance if the results are to be used in the development of criteria and regulations by the Atomic Energy Control Board. Therefore, a special effort must be made to keep a representative group of independent scientific

reviewers interested in the program and up to date with the latest advances. An effort should also be made to keep the general scientific community aware of the general direction and progress of the research. Opportunities must be provided for dissenting scientific opinion to be heard and taken into account during the course of the research.

4.4 The News Media

The news media is generally regarded as a carrier of an organization's message to the publics it seeks to inform. However, the news media itself must be regarded as a potential audience for the message. An informed media is necessary so that when the media writes on the subject of uranium mine tailings, it will do so in an informed manner, and will reflect the existence of the Office and the research it has done. The science writers in the media form an important subset as an audience of special importance and interest. Dealing with this subset will be somewhat simpler than with the general media, as science writers can be expected to be interested in the Office and its work and will take the trouble to inform themselves thoroughly.

4.5 Residents of Communities Near Mines and Tailings Piles

The people most directly affected by uranium tailings are the people who live in the mining communities or near abandoned tailings piles.

Therefore, they can be expected to have a keen interest in the subject, and consitute an important audience for the Office.

Failure to deal with this audience could result in a lack of credibility for the research results produced by the Office. For example, people living in mining communities and having practical experience with both mining operations and tailings management may have their own ideas about how tailings should be properly managed over the long term. Failure to take these ideas into account, and to establish links of credibility between the research and the communities at an early stage of the research work, could result in a lack of credibility when the research is completed and in difficulty in implementing the results. It is not enough simply to anticipate the questions from the communities and to take them into account in the Office's program. The Office must be seen to be consulting people in the communities and to be considering their suggestions.

4.6 Public Interest Groups

A number of public interest groups concerned with public health, the environment and societal choices about energy utilization can be expected to have an interest in the final disposal of uranium tailings, and thus, by implication, in the work of the Office. It would assist the final acceptance of the work of the

Office and the criteria developed by the AECB and the mining companies if these groups were involved in some way as the course of the research is being determined and as the research is being carried out. During the course of preparing this document, interviews were conducted with several individuals who represent the most extreme of these public interest groups; those opposed to the use of nuclear energy. One might assume that because the groups wish the elimination of the uranium mining industry, they would not be inclined to assist in finding solutions to the tailings question because such solutions could make the continuation of the uranium industry more likely. However, it was found that the majority of individuals from such groups who were interviewed view their commitment to the environment very seriously and would indeed participate if asked to do so. Such participation programs would take considerable time on the part of the Office, as individuals in these groups have many other issues on which they wish to make their views known. Therefore, considerable listening on the part of the representatives of the Office may be required before productive discussions can be entered into. However, the effort would be worthwhile because it could result in the acceptance of the Office's work by those organizations that would be expected to be its severest critics.

Other organizations that fall within the broad umbrella of public interest groups may be less difficult to deal with. The Canadian Radiological

Protection Association, for example, may be prepared to participate in discussions regarding the health risks of various aspects of tailings management, and even to lend its endorsement to solutions it finds acceptable.

Environmental groups will be the audiences easiest to reach, because the nature of their interest will allow them to readily become involved with the Office.

4.7 Governments

Because there is still a question of who will have final responsibility for the disposal of uranium tailings, it will be necessary to keep provincial governments informed about the work as it proceeds, so that any potential disagreements can be identified and resolved before the effort committed to a particular direction becomes so large that it is irreversible. Informal contacts can be maintained at the working level with the provinces involved through the Office's existing Technical Advisory Committee, (see p. 26) and the more formal discussions undertaken at the level of the deputy ministers.

5.0 PUBLIC INFORMATION MATERIALS

A variety of public information materials could be produced by the National Uranium Tailings Office, ranging from simple fact sheets to a 16mm film.

5.1 Fact Sheet or Pamphlet

Fact sheets or pamphlets are the usual method of providing concise written information on a particular program, and are useful for responding to routine enquiries as well as for distribution to larger numbers of the public at meetings or through mass mailings. At least one fact sheet, describing the office's mandate and work, should be produced. This could perhaps be done most effectively by the EMR Information Service. An initial print run of 10,000 English and 3,000 French should be adequate. The small four-fold format that fits readily into a letter envelope would likely be most appropriate. The message should be kept as simple as possible, keeping in mind that the average recipient is not likely to be a scientist.

5.2 Booklet

A larger booklet, describing the program and its work in more detail, could be produced to serve as an intermediate step between the pamphlet and technical documents. While the language should remain simple, illustrations and photographs can be added for clarification. It is important that the reader be able to scan the entire message by looking at the illustrations and their accompanying captions.

5.3 Scientific Documents

Scientific documents are produced during the course of any research program. They should be recognized as potential information material for some audiences, and a sufficient number of copies should be produced to allow for distribution to more than the usual technical recipients. Plans for research and the results of the research should be available on request to the general public in a form understandable by a non-scientific audience.

5.4 Slides

A series of slides will be required, both for technical presentations and for describing the program to non-technical audiences. The services of a design consultant and a commercial artist should be engaged. Internally-designed slides present the technical facts, but often do so in a manner that makes it difficult for the audience to comprehend. For the general public, slides should be kept simple, often with several slides illustrating a series of sequential messages rather than one slide with many messages. The EMR Information Services should be able to assist in this production.

5.5 Slide-Tape Presentations

While some people readily assimilate knowledge from printed material, others find it very difficult. A slide-tape presentation is a simple method of

overcoming this problem. Machines are available which automatically change slides as the recorded voice of the announcer delivers the message. They project either onto an internal back-lit screen or onto a larger external screen, depending on the audience requirements. Thus, an entire presentation can be standardized and delivered in the same format each time. Sometimes, multi-projector slide shows are attractive because of their ability to approach the level of visual presentation otherwise found only in film. However, they should not be considered if the equipment has to travel, because it is prone to failure and can be difficult to set up. The EMR Information Service should be able to produce such material.

5.6 Film

If large audiences are to be reached with an audio-visual presentation, a slide-tape program becomes inadequate. For distribution to school, television and theatre audiences, a film is preferred. Visually, much more is possible with film than with slides, thus adding to the ability to explain complex technical ideas. It must be recognized, however, that the production of films is relatively expensive. A cost of $100,000 for a 20-minute film would not be unreasonable. As well, a film has a limited lifetime. As the research program progresses or changes, a film becomes outdated. Revisions to a film can cost nearly as much as the original version.

5.7 Posters

Posters could be considered in conjunction with the fact sheets or pamphlets discussed earlier. Posters are particularly effective as a medium for focussing group discussions, such as in a school classroom or a small meeting. They should provide visual material relevant to the program, along with concise messages of importance. Although more expensive, four-color posters are considerably more effective than black and white ones.

5.8 Newsletters

Newsletters are an effective way of communicating directly with selected audiences. They require a delivery system based on direct mailing to a list that requires compilation. Newsletters can vary in content and technical complexity depending on the audience to which they are addressed. They should be considered for specific audiences such as scientists, public interest group members, elected officials, the media and persons who have expressed an interest in being kept informed about the program. The EMR Information Service would be able to assist with writing and production, but distribution would likely be the Office's responsibility.

5.9 News Releases

News releases are issued when the Office has something specific to announce to the general public, such as the establishment of the Office, the appointment of a director, a significant change of program direction, or a significant conclusion. They should not be used as a method of issuing a general program update, since that would be "background" information and not "hard news". News releases are sent to the media with the expectation that they will be used as the basis for news stories. Copies should be sent to other important audiences when it is deemed essential that the message be received in its entirety, without having been passed through the filter of the news media. News releases are generally more politically sensitive and will require a higher level of clearance than the other information materials discussed here.

5.10 Feature Articles

Articles designed for publication in community newspapers could be produced by the Office and distributed to newspapers in communities that have a specific interest in the program. Generally, local newspapers will print such articles verbatim, providing they are well written and they touch on a matter of local interest.

6.0 DELIVERY OF INFORMATION

When information materials are produced, adequate delivery sytems must be implemented if the information is to reach the public for which it is intended. The following delivery systems should be considered:

6.1 Response to Requests for Information

Some individuals and organizations will hear of the Program through various mechanisms, whether or not the Office chooses to make itself widely known, and will request information about its work. Such requests can be dealt with by the mailing of individual responses, together with the fact sheet or pamphlet, or by mailing the booklet.

6.2 Use of Other Organizations

Public affairs programs conducted by other organizations, such as nuclear utilities, mining companies, governments and AECL frequently require information on uranium tailings disposal. Information materials should be made available to these agencies as they are produced, for distribution to the public. This distribution mechanism is of negligible cost to the Office.

6.3 Speaking Engagements

Members of the Office could accept engagements to speak about the Program to a variety of audiences. Some invitations to speak will be inevitable, but steps can be taken to encourage invitations. Commitment to an extensive public speaking program can cause some drain on the manpower of a relatively small organization, but such a program has the advantage of keeping the organization in touch with a good cross-section of society without any real exposure to risk of adverse reaction. It may be possible to generate a moderate number of speaking engagements by merely informing other government and industry organizations that speakers are available. Scientists who accept speaking engagements should receive special training.

6.4 Direct Mail

A direct mailing program can be a very effective method of reaching selected audiences with specific information, or of keeping all audiences up to date on developments within the program. A computer mailing list, from which specific audiences can be selected, is required. Commercial firms provide services including the production and maintenance of the mailing lists and the printing and mailing of information. In a small organization, this approach is generally preferable to establishing an in-house computer data base and mailing

program. With such a system, it is possible to "customize" information according to audience requirements.

6.5 Film Distribution

If a film is produced, it can be placed with a commercial distributor or the National Film Board for distribution to a large number of audiences. Such organizations print catalogues of the films they have available, and provide a complete service including shipping and the maintenance of prints. Monthly reports on showings are provided, and billing is on the basis of the number of times the film has been shown. If the Office desires to reach school audiences with a film, it may be advisable to produce a teachers' kit that allows the classroom teacher to use the film as the focal point for a larger learning experience.

6.6 Advertising

Of the several types of advertising available, the type that advises the public of the availability of information materials is the only type likely to be politically acceptable, and even this would likely require a rather high level of approval. If it is desired to advertise the availability of information materials, suitable media would be the local newspapers and/or radio stations in communities where there are tailings piles, and "vertical" publications of specific interest groups (i.e. newsletters of specific

organizations the Office wishes to reach). Such advertising serves two functions: it raises the profile of the organization and it generates requests for the information materials that have been produced. Information sent in response to requests is much more likely to be carefully read than that sent by bulk mail, thus a case can be made that advertising increases the over-all effectiveness of the information material.

6.7 Briefings for Selected Audiences

From time to time, the Office will want to ensure that some particular audience (e.g. elected officials, or a public interest group) has a good understanding of the Program and has the opportunity to ask detailed questions. In such cases, a personal briefing is a useful technique. The briefing will usually comprise a prepared presentation with slides and an opportunity for questions and discussion. Such briefings should be conducted by a senior program officer with special training.

6.8 Media Seminars

Members of the media who write about the Program and about tailings disposal will require background information, so that when they are under pressure of deadline, they have a context in which to place the most recent information they are writing about. One way of satisfying this requirement is to forward program documents to the members of the media, but this

is not always the most effective method. Media seminars, where the program can be presented audio-visually, where questions can be answered immediately, where discussion can take place and where personal relationships can be established with members of the media, are an extremely effective method of providing the information needs of the media. Usually, news stories will result from a media seminar, but the approach to the media should be that the Office is more interested in ensuring that the members of the media have adequate information than in having stories written about the Program.

Specific target groups within the media might include media representatives in a community that is located near tailings piles, or national science writers.

6.9 News Conferences

News conferences can be used under circumstances similar to those leading to the issuing of a news release. News conferences are preferred by the electronic media because they provide film or tape rather than just a news release to be read by an announcer. A news conference allows members of the media to ask follow-up questions based on the news release and on other matters of interest. For this reason, news conferences are politically sensitive and will usually require a high level of clearance.

7.0 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The nature of the uranium tailings question indicates that information dissemination activities, no matter how well executed, will not be sufficient to develop the kind of public acceptance required for the research performed by the Office. There is a very good probability that the various publics interested in uranium tailings will disagree on the preferred direction of the research. It is therefore desirable to provide a mechanism for resolving this potential conflict, so that the work of the Office will have broad support.

It would be expected that the mining companies would differ with environmental groups on the range of things to be investigated. There are risks in giving either one too much influence in the program, and the preferred course of action probably lies somewhere between the views presented by these two sides. As well, there may be valid differences of opinion among others with an interest in tailings disposal, and a mechanism needs to be established for resolving such differences.

The Office has already established a Technical Advisory Committee, (TAC) consisting of 15 members representing the uranium industry, governments and regulatory agencies. However, the independence of advice received from such a committee will be suspected both by the environmental movement and by the communities with tailings problems. This results from the fact that industry representatives have a vested interest and the public often suspects the

independence of government agencies which over the years have developed a close association with a particular industry. Changes to the TAC, or new mechanisms, are required to rectify this problem.

7.1 Principles of Public Participation

Public participation is based upon the premise that a decision arrived at by consensus after adequate discussion of alternatives by all those affected will have broader support and thus will be easier to implement than a unilateral decision, and that this holds true to a very large extent irrespective of the quality of the decision. In the case of the aphoristic horse which turned out to be a camel because it was designed by a committee, it is held that there will be broad support among the committee members for the camel as the preferred beast of burden, even though some might have liked a Kentucky thoroughbred and others might have wanted an ox.

It is important to recognize that public participation is not a method of convincing the affected groups of the validity of a decision after it has been made, but a sharing of decision-making power by the agency concerned. In some cases, it is not possible or desirable to formally share decision-making power, and in such cases public consultation is often substituted for public participation. Nevertheless, it is important that the consultation take place before decisions are made. Of the two methods, true public participation has the highest potential reward for the

agency, but it also presents the highest risk. In the case of the Office, it will likely not be possible to share decision-making power, as this is a government function, so it will be assumed that when the term "public participation" is used, it will mean public consultation.

Public participation involves a sharing of information to reach better decisions. In the case of the Office, it will require two-way communication between the Office and various interest groups, as well as communication among the interest groups themselves.

7.2 Expectations and Responsibilities

Agencies attempting public participation programs for the first time may be disappointed by the initial results. It is important not to expect too much at first, as the process will be rather slow. However, the time lost is likely to be rewarded at the end, when the decisions that are finally arrived at can be implemented much more speedily.

There are several reasons for the slow progress at the beginning:

i) Participants may be suspicious of the agency's motives and it will take time for a measure of trust to develop on both sides.

ii) The agency may have already made a number of decisions that the participants would have liked

to have input to, and it will take some time to either convince the agency to reopen those decisions for consideration, or for the participants to accept the fact that they are irrevocable. Much speedier progress can be made at the beginning if the process starts with a blank slate.

iii) Participants will feel a need to state their point of view on a number of issues that are of importance to them, but irrevelant to the issue at hand. It will take time to arrive at a mutually agreed-upon set of issues to be addressed and upon procedures whereby the process can function effectively.

iv) Some participants will feel the need to resist deviation from their historic beliefs and position. For this reason, it is important that proper counter-balances be provided on the make-up of any consultative group. Even so, it will take time for group dynamics to begin to forge a compromise.

The Office has a right to expect that persons who agree to participate will work toward the stated objectives upon which the participation program is founded. If the objective is to develop acceptable uranium tailings disposal technologies, then the Office has a right to expect that participants will not try to prevent the development of acceptable technologies because they do not wish the uranium mining industry to become more publicly acceptable.

Persons who participate in discussions will incur certain expenses. The Office should establish a policy for reimbursing participants, and where necessary for making advance arrangements for transportation and accommodation so that participants will not need to strain their personal finances to participate.

Participative groups often suggest that funding should be provided for independent research. This is rarely done, and would likely not be possible for the Office under its present mandate. However, suggestions regarding suitable research contractors and directions should be seriously considered.

Inevitably, discussions of public participation groups touch on issues that are not within the mandate of the agency concerned. Community representatives, for example, may wish to discuss financial arrangements to be made by mining companies in order to provide for the ultimate disposal of tailings now being created.

The Office must insist that such considerations are not within its jurisdiction, although it could suggest to whom such representations might be made. Failure to clearly define the areas for which the Office is responsible may create an expectation that the Office would act on certain suggestions, and this could ultimately harm both the credibility of the Office and the usefulness of the process.

7.3 Techniques

Public participation techniques can vary from simply allowing questions at after-dinner speeches to elaborate consultative mechanisms that turn decision-making power over to a committee on which the Office has only minority representation. For the purposes of this section, the discussion will be limited to techniques that might not normally be used by the Office or that require a different approach from the one the Office might otherwise take.

i) Advisory Committees

The Technical Advisory Committee is a form of public participation but, as previously mentioned, its membership does not adequately represent the publics that should participate. The suggestion has been made that independent scientists might be added to the membership of the committee to allow representation from the scientific community. Some interaction with a group of independent scientists is desirable.

The TAC consists of five mining company representatives, three provincial government representatives, and six representatives of federal government agencies. The provincial and federal government members include representation from regulatory agencies.

It is recognized that the TAC is already of a size that borders on being too large to operate effectively, but there is a real need to involve representatives of affected communities and of environmental groups on some central advisory committee.

One way of approaching this problem might be to forego the addition of independent scientists to the TAC, and instead balance the five representatives of the mining companies with an equal number of representatives chosen from the environmental movement and from communities affected by uranium tailings. A separate "scientific review committee" of independent scientists could then be formed for the sole purpose of reviewing the technical aspects of the research work. This role would be similar to that of the Technical Advisory Committee to the Nuclear Fuel Waste Management Program. To complete the structural change and avoid confusion, the name of the TAC could be changed to reflect its enlarged membership and interest.

This new format would have two advantages: it would provide very high scientific credibility for the Office's research because of the independent technical review, and it would place members of the affected communities and environmental groups on the same committee as the representatives of the mining companies, with the

joint goal of developing solutions to the uranium tailings disposal problem. With governments and regulatory agencies providing a third force on the committee, a situation would be created where a consensus could be forged from opposing points of view.

ii) Consultative Meetings

Because of the need to limit the size of the advisory committee, it will be possible to offer membership to only a few representatives of communities and environmental groups. Nevertheless, it will be desirable to involve a larger segment of these publics in a consultative process.

One method of achieving this goal is to arrange a series of consultative meetings with community and environment groups. A typical meeting would involve a presentation by the Office, followed by a two-way exchange of views and information. Several meetings may be required with each group to arrive at a reasonable understanding. People who might be approached include representatives of community councils, community environmental boards (such as the Elliot Lake Environmental Council), and groups that have in the past expressed concern about uranium mining and tailings management, such as Algoma-Manitoulin Nuclear Awareness and the United Church in Saskatchewan. It is suggested that informal

discussions with small groups in a non-confrontational environment would likely produce the best results, at least initially. Even if the discussions are of an informal nature, they should be documented and the documentation submitted to the AECB together with the results of the Office's technical work.

iii) Conference

It may be desirable, toward the end of the Office's mandate, to organize a large conference which would bring together members from all of the groups with which the Office has interacted, as well as representatives of industry, governments and regulatory agencies. Plenary sessions would feature noted speakers on tailings management, and small workshops would deal with specific aspects. The results of the Office's research would serve as resource material for such a workshop, and the recommendations of the conference would be published and submitted to the AECB together with the results of the Office's technical work.

8.0 OPTIONAL PROGRAM LEVELS

Three levels of program are considered: a minimum program, a medium program, and a maximum program. The public affairs and public participation methods previously discussed are classified according to the program level in which they would be employed.

8.1 Information Materials

	Minimum	Medium	Maximum
Fact sheet or brochure	X	X	X
Larger Booklet		X	X
Posters			X
Slide-Tape Presentation		X	X
Slides	X	X	X
Film			X
Teachers' Kit			X
Scientific Documents	X	X	X
Newsletters		X	X
News Releases			X
Feature Articles			X

8.2 Delivery of Information

	Minimum	Medium	Maximum
Respond to Requests	X	X	X
Use Other Organizations	X	X	X
Speaking Engagements	X*	X	X
Direct Mail		X	X
Film Distribution			X
Advertising			X
Briefings	X	X	X
Media Seminars		X	X
News Conferences			X

*Scientific only

8.3 Public Participation

	Minimum	Medium	Maximum
Tech. Adv. Cttee.	X*		
Restructured Adv. Cttee.		X	
Share decision making with restructured Advisory Committee			X
Scientific Review Cttee.		X	X
Consultative Meetings		X	X
Conference			X

*Already exists - add independent technical advisors.

9.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The minimum program described in Section 8 will be adequate to allow the Office to carry out its scientific work. While the environmental movement can be expected from time to time to raise the issue of uranium tailings, the general public's level of concern on the issue is not sufficient to require a large-scale public affairs program to allow the Office to complete its studies.

Communities near existing inactive tailings piles have generally a low level of concern about them except insofar as they cause a local inconvenience or potentially threaten something such as the community's water supply. In fact, some communities do not want much public discussion of the tailings because of potentially adverse effects on the

tourism industry. Communities appear to hold the view that for the most part, the mining companies are doing an adequate job of storing tailings for the short term. Long-term aspects, when they are considered, tend to focus on the question of financial responsibility.

By following the course of the minimum public affairs program, the Office will leave to the AECB the task of later developing public acceptance for disposal criteria. That task would ultimately be more difficult because much of the groundwork for the development of the criteria would have been laid without public input.

The medium program should be followed if the Office wishes to assume some of the responsibility for developing public acceptance for its research results. While there may be a fear that the Office's higher profile under the medium program would lead to the same level of public opposition that confronted the Nuclear Fuel Waste Management Program, this fear would appear to be ill-founded because of the Office's relative immunity from the NIMBY Syndrome. The much more active public affairs stance of the Office under the medium program should lead to a considerable degree of public acceptance for its research results. With this level of public acceptance in hand, and with the AECB's own public consultation processes, it should be relatively easy for the AECB to develop and promulgate disposal criteria that would be acceptable to a large percentage of the public. Such acceptance could considerably ease concerns about future new mining developments.

The maximum program, which would result in the Office sharing decision-making responsibility with an advisory committee, is not recommended. It is doubtful that the mandate of the Office would allow such sharing of responsibility, and in any case it is likely that the program has proceeded too far for this approach to be effective. The production of information materials such as films would appear to be unwarranted in view of the general public's relatively low level of concern about uranium tailings at present. Unless the Office is trying to establish a very high profile, news releases, advertising and news conferences are not required.

10.0 TRAINING, MANPOWER AND FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

10.1 Budgets and Staff

The minimum program can likely be executed with no increase in staff, and an annual budget requirement in the vicinity of $10,000 to $20,000. The EMR Information Service should be able to supply all services that cannot be provided by the Office's own staff.

The medium program will be difficult to implement unless the Office hires its own public affairs officer or contracts out for such services if staff-years are not available. The co-ordination of consultation meetings, speaking engagements, briefings and the production and delivery of information materials may be cumbersome if handled on a part-time basis by an

officer of the EMR Information Service and part of the time by senior program officers. It would be more desirable to establish a fully co-ordinated program dedicated to the needs of the Office. Budget requirements would obviously be somewhat higher, with approximately $150,000 per year being needed. As well, the increased public consultation would require up to one additional technical staff-year per year.

The maximum program would require a public affairs officer and, because of the increased level of the information materials produced, a budget in excess of $200,000 per year. The level of technical staff time required would be slightly higher than for the medium program.

10.2 Staff Training

The minimum program would likely require no further staff training, as some of the Office's technical staff already have sufficient skills to conduct the required briefings.

For the medium program, it would be advisable to have all technical staff trained in public communications and conflict management. A number of consulting firms and management training centres offer such courses.

The maximum program would require training at a similar level to the medium program.

11.0 CONCLUSIONS

The National Uranium Tailings Office will be able to undertake its scientific work without encountering the kind of public opposition that hindered the field work of the Nuclear Fuel Waste Management Program, because of the Office's relative immunity from the NIMBY Syndrome and because of the low level of concern about mine tailings in communities adjacent to tailings piles.

The Office has the opportunity to choose whether it wishes to develop public acceptance for its research results and thus for the recommendations on disposal technologies and criteria that will result from its work. The development of such public acceptance requires additional public participation processes.

Interviews with environmental groups have indicated their willingness to participate in processes that will help to develop widely-accepted answers to tailings management issues. Public participation processes should include these groups as well as representatives of communities affected by tailings.